



Let's Take a Break

Learning, attention, and attitude can all be enhanced by taking breaks in the classroom. Physical breaks provided in school are an ideal way to encourage activity and develop fitness among children. Breaks help combat the negative effect on energy, attention levels, and enthusiasm. Here are some simple ideas for school

School Breaks

Action	How to
Simon Says	One person is chosen to be "Simon" the others stand in a line. Simon calls out an action for the children to follow. If Simon doesn't say "Simon Says...." whoever does the action without hearing "Simon Says" is out and has to sit down. If Simon uses "Simon Says, everyone must follow the instruction. You can vary the actions according to the age group. The last person who is standing can then be "Simon"!
Moving to Music	Put some music on. Let children take turns choosing the music. They can dance with a partner or "free dance"
Hokey Pokey	Children form a circle. The song goes: You put your right hand in, you put your right hand out, you put your right hand in, and you shake it all about, you do the hokey pokey and you turn yourself around. That's what it's all about. Continue with: left hand, right foot, left foot, head, butt, and whole self.
Serious School	Teacher says "Serious School has just begun. No more laughing, no more fun. If you show your teeth or tongue, you will have a penalty done" The teacher proceeds to do silly things to make students laugh. The children that laugh hard to expose their teeth and/or tongues have to do what the teacher tells them to do. For instance, hop on one leg, rub their belly and tap their head, etc.
Mother May I?	One student or teacher stands facing away from a line of students. Students in line take turns asking "Mother may I take ___steps?" The student or teacher who is mother replies yes or no. Those who forget to say "Mother may I" go back to the start line. The first one to reach "Mother" is the winner
Hot Potato	Everybody stands in a circle. Pass a beanbag around the circle to music. When the music stops, the student holding the beanbag is out and must go in the center of the circle and do jumping jacks or whatever the teacher tells them to do. Pretend the bean bag is a very hot potato.
Standing at Desks	Have students stand up next to their desks and do: jumping jacks; knee lifts; flap arms like a bird; hopping; scissors (feet apart then cross in front, feet apart then cross in back). Then do basic stretches: reach for the sky; touch your feet; butterfly stretch (sit with bottom of feet together); knee to chest; rotate ankles; scratch your back.
Knot game	Stand in a circle, close your eyes. Walk towards the center of the circle with outstretched hands. Find another hand for each of yours. Once all hands are linked up, open your eyes. Try to unravel the knot without opening hands so that you end up in a circle again. Don't get frustrated if you can't unravel it completely, sometimes it's just not possible. The knot game works best in groups of 10-20 people. Form two knots if there are more of you.

Students Need Breaks

School Breaks

Action	How To
Stretching	Slowly stretch neck, shoulders, arms, hands, back, legs, and feet. Move arms, head, and torso in circles. March in place. Avoid jerky movements.
Walking	Lead a brisk walk around the room; consider using the stairs or going outside. If students want a more vigorous workout, they can lift higher or pump their arms while they walk.
Late for School!	Tell the children to copy all your actions. Pretend you are asleep and suddenly wake up and are late for school. Brush your teeth, wash your face, put your clothes on, run downstairs, run back up (can't find your shoes) back down stairs, eat breakfast, pick up your bag, open front door, shut door, run down the street, jump over a hedge, look both ways, cross the road, etc. Finally arrive at school slowing down, panting, and puffing. Then suddenly stop at the closed doors. It's Saturday!! Use your imagination.
The 12 Days of Fitness (grades 3-5)	Students act out the following fitness song: "On the first day of fitness, my trainer gave to me" 12 jumping jacks, 11 raise the roofs, 10 knee lifts, 9 side stretches, 8 jogs in place, 7 jabs/punches, 6 kicks to the front, 5 hula hoops, 4 jumping ropes (imaginary) 3 muscle poses, 2 scissors (feet apart then cross in front, feet apart then cross in back), and 1 stork standing (balance on one foot) You can write the activities on the board or poster board to make them easier for children to follow and to sing along.
Factor It In (grades 4-5)	Students are divided into four groups and sent to all four corners of the room. Teacher labels each corner of the room with a number 1, 2, 3, & 4. The teacher calls out a number and if students are in a corner that is a factor of that number, they must move to another corner. Movements include: jumping, skipping, walking, hopping on one foot, marching. Example: if teacher calls out six, students in corners labeled two and three will move to another corner.
It's a Zoo in Here	Teacher selects an animal or has students select an animal: monkey, bear, snake, elephant, kangaroo, lion, or tiger. Students must imitate the way the animal walks or moves beside their desks or around the classroom for at least 30 seconds. Students continue until the teacher signals to move like the next animal. Variation: Make cards with animal names and children can read the names and act them out.
It's Snowing	Break up into two teams, one on each side of the room. Each student balls up a piece of paper similar to a snow ball and places it on the floor in front of him/her. When the teacher calls out "It's snowing," students pick up the balled up paper and throw it at the other team. Each time the teacher calls out "It's snowing," the students throw the paper snow balls to the other team. When the teacher stops calling out, the game is over. The team with the least amount of snow balls on their side wins.
Left Right, Left Right	Students stand with enough room to walk in place and swing arms vertically (like a robot). Stand with your right leg up, your right arm down, then opposite side. Do this for 30 seconds and increase speed.

MDCH Cardiovascular Health, Nutrition and Physical Activity Section www.michigan.gov/cvh

For more information contact: Lisa Grost grostl@michigan.gov Thank you to Michiana Coordinated School Health Leadership Institute for inspiring this project.